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Mauritania's International Fishery Relations

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
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MAURITANIA'S INTERNATIONAL FISHERY RELATIONS

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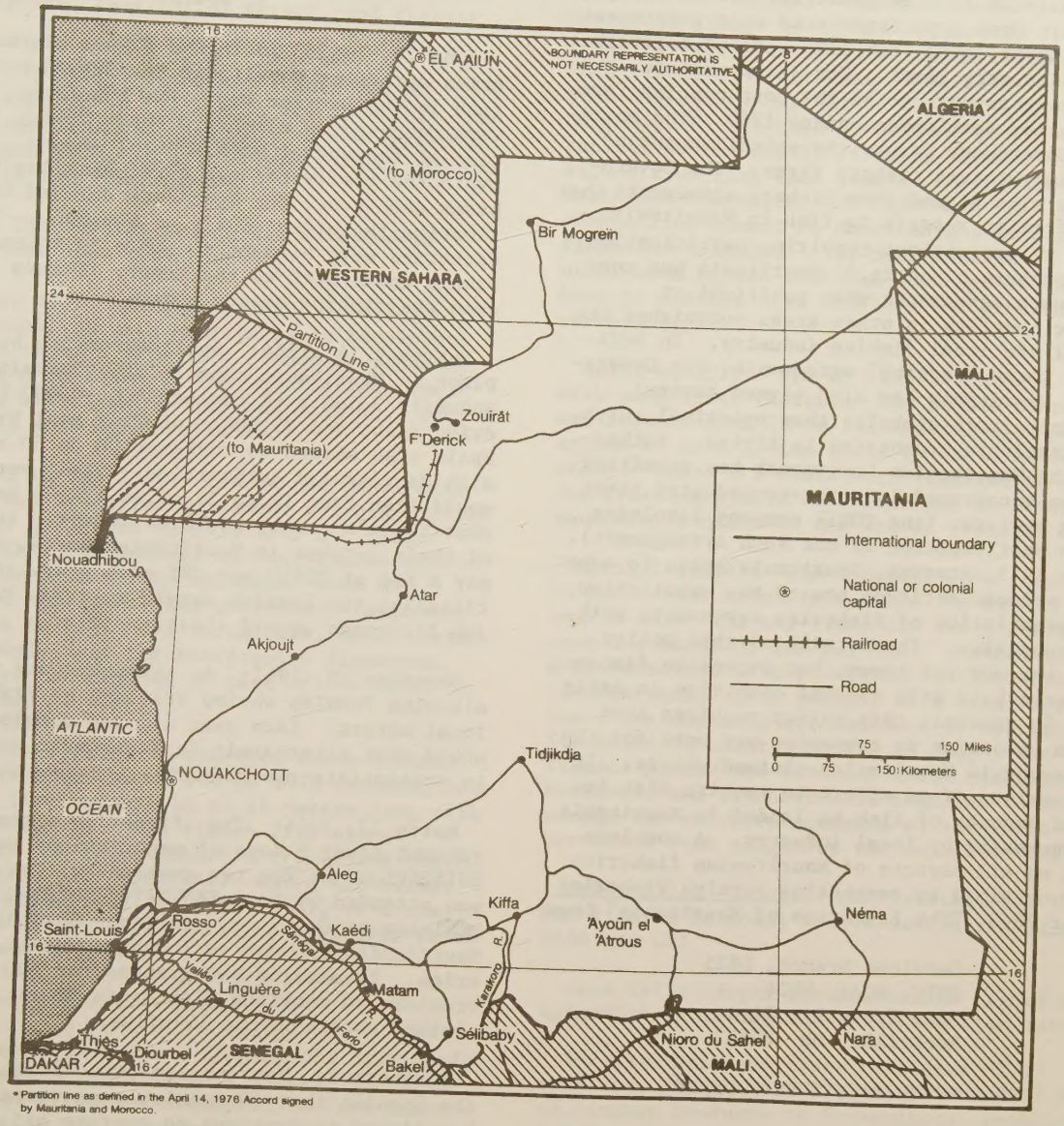
ABSTRACT

Mauritania has concluded fishery agreements with about 20 foreign countries during the past 15 years. Most of these agreements have been negotiated on a government-to-government level, but some were negotiated on a government-to-industry level. In late 1975, the Mauritanian Government adopted a much tougher attitude toward the negotiation and renegotiation of fisheries agreements with other countries.



* Partition line as defined in the April 14, 1976 Accord signed by Mauritania and Morocco.

Figure 1.--Map of Mauritania

I. INTRODUCTION

Mauritania has concluded fishery agreements with nearly 20 foreign countries during the past 15 years. Most were negotiated on a government-to-government level, but some were on a government-to-industry level. The joint venture arrangement appears to be the most popular form of fisheries development since 1969. The Mauritanian Government favors the establishment of more joint venture fishery firms. The Government has also signed many fishery agreements that permit foreign vessels to fish in Mauritanian-claimed waters without requiring participation in any onshore projects.[1/] Mauritania has concluded such agreements when political or economic benefits in other areas outweighed the needs of the local fishing industry. In addition to these "working" agreements, the Government of Mauritania has also signed several agreements, more symbolic than practical, with other developing countries in Africa. Futhermore, the Mauritanian Government has permitted and even encouraged industry-to-industry joint fishing ventures (the COMIP company involving Italian participation is one such arrangement). In late 1975, however, Mauritania began to adopt a more arduous attitude toward the negotiation and renegotiation of fisheries agreements with other countries. The details of this policy change are not yet known, but extensive discussions were held with several countries in early 1976. In general, this policy requires that foreign countries or companies pay more for the fish caught in Mauritanian-claimed waters. It also consists of an effort to require that increased amounts of fish be landed in Mauritania for processing by local industry. A complete report on all aspects of Mauritanian fisheries can be obtained by requesting Foreign Fisheries Leaflet 76-3, "The Fisheries of Mauritania" from:

Services Branch, D825
ESIC, NOAA, WSC4
6009 Executive Blvd.
Rockville, MD 20852

II. DEVELOPMENTS BY COUNTRY

About 170 foreign fishing vessels operated in Mauritania's coastal waters during 1974. These vessels ranged in size from 20 GRT (gross registered tons) to 30,000 GRT, and they landed 65,132 metric tons (t) in 1974. Mauritanian fishery officals generally agree that the number of fishing vessels actually operating off their coast is well above the 170-vessel estimate. The same officials also know that foreign fishery catches--both legal and illegal --are well above the 65,132 t reported as having been landed by foreign vessels in Mauritanian ports during 1974. The following pages provide a brief chronological summary of fishery agreements by country and a description of that country's fishing effort off Mauritania.

A. Spain

June 27, 1900: Spain and France signed a fisheries agreement permitting Spanish fishermen to fish in the Levrier Bay. The Spaniards, however, were required to dismantle their drying facilities at the end of each fishing season. To avoid the costly process of dismantling their bases each year, the Spaniards decided to use floating factories--built on pontoons. The factories were brought to shore in November and simply towed back to the Canary Islands in June when the fishing season ended.

February 14, 1964: Spain agreed to build a plant in Mauritania capable of processing annually 3,500 t of canned fish, 6,000 t of salt-dried fish, and 25,000 t of fish meal by 1966. Spain also agreed to register 20 to 50 vessels with Mauritanian authorities. These vessels would fish from 12 to 30 miles (22-56 km) off Mauritania's coast, would be required to land all of their catches in Mauritanian ports, and would pay a fee of US$10 per GRT each year. Additionally, the Spanish agreed to train Mauritanian fishermen aboard their vessels.

December 10, 1967: An agreement was reached allowing Spanish shrimp trawlers to fish in local waters. Each year a mixed commission would meet alternately in Nouakchott and Madrid to renegotiate the fisheries agreement.

March 27, 1976: The fisheries agreement was renewed after 8 days of negotiations between delegations of the two countries. The ceremony was attended by Leopoldo Calvo-Sotelo, Spanish Minister of Commerce, and Ishaq Ould Ragel, Mauritanian Minister of Industry, Mines, and Fisheries. Permission was granted for 290 Spanish trawlers to continue fishing in Mauritanian-claimed waters beyond 12-miles.

Furthermore, Mauritanian authorities assured the Spanish that 40 Spanish tuna vessels would be allowed to continue to operate off its coast even if Mauritania extended its marine limits to 200 miles (370 km).

In 1974, about 40 small (20-GRT) Spanish fishing vessels from the Canary Islands fished seasonally in Mauritanian-claimed waters. These vessels were primarily old, wooden seiners. In addition, there were two modern stern trawlers attached to the IMAPEC fishing Company during the entire year. In 1974, the Canary fleet landed 14,604 t of fish and the Spanish trawlers landed 657 t (appendix A).

B. France

June 27, 1900: A fisheries agreement was signed with Spain allowing Spanish fishermen to

1/ However, a percentage of the catch normally must be landed in Mauritania for local processing.

operate off Mauritania (page two).

June 19, 1961: France and Mauritania agreed to give one another equal rights in their respective ports, territorial waters, and fishing zones.

March 15, 1973: Since Mauritania had no vessels capable of fishing in French waters, the 1961 agreement was terminated. A new agreement was reached permitting 11 French lobster vessels to fish in Mauritanian waters.

1975: The 1973 agreement was extended to cover French tuna fishermen.

February 1976: A French fisheries delegation held discussions with Mauritania in Nouakchott under the terms of the 1974 Franco-Mauritanian cooperation agreement. The negotiations dealt primarily with lobster and tuna fishing, but no details were made available.

April 15 to 16, 1976: France and Mauritania signed a new fisheries agreement which specified the number of French vessels (but not their tonnage) that can operate in Mauritanian waters. Although details of the agreement were not available, Mauritania had previously indicated its desire to base fees on catches, obtain training and employment for Mauritanian fishermen, and require the landing of part of the catch in Mauritania.

The French originally operated seven lobster vessels off Mauritania, but in 1970 reduced this number to five vessels 18 to 26 meters long with GRTs of 30 to 100. The French fish almost exclusively for spiny lobsters (Panulirus regius and Palinurus mauritanicus), which are either landed at Nouadhibou (15 t in 1974), or transshipped to France. The incidental finfish catch is sold in Nouadhibou.

C. Japan

The Japanese have found fishing off Mauritania extremely attractive for many years. Initially, the Japanese fishermen attempted to fish Mauritanian-claimed waters without an agreement. The Mauritanians, however, began seizing the Japanese fishing vessels, which led Japan to eventually negotiate with Mauritania.

April 8, 1970: Members of the Japan Deep Sea Trawlers Association (JDSTA) reached an agreement with the Government of Mauritania whereby the Japanese would pay $28.25 per GRT for a fleet of 24 Japanese trawlers totaling 19,640 GRT, for a grand total of $555,000 per year. The Japanese also agreed to buy 3,000 t of locally frozen squid, octopus, and seabream each year. The final agreement omitted the Mauritanian requests that the Japanese provide five trawlers to survey local fish stocks and that three crewmen be trained on each Japanese vessel.

March 12, 1971: JDSTA and the Government of Mauritania reached a new agreement whereby the Japanese agreed to 1) limit their fleet to 15 vessels; 2) increase their purchases of locally processed fish; 3) pay $1 million in fishing fees; 4) train three Mauritanian crewmen on each vessel; 5) purchase 50 percent of the $300,000 equity capital of the SOFRIMA freezing company; 6) purchase 30 percent of the equity capital of the SURVIF freezing plant; 7)unload 12,000 t of fish each year to supply the above mentioned companies; and 8) send an unspecified number of Mauritanians to Japan for fisheries training. The Mauritanians on the other hand agreed that the Japanese would not have to provide five trawlers for exploratory surveys.

April 6, 1972: The 1971 agreement was renewed with some minor changes. The number of trawlers was reduced from 15 to 14 vessels. The Japanese agreed to send 11 ice boats to fish in coastal areas. These ice boats were required to supply the freezing plants with fish and to train Mauritanian crews in the art of fishing.

April 16, 1973: The Japanese were permitted to operate 17 trawlers between the 12 (22 km) and 30 mile (56 km) fisheries zone, contingent upon a payment of $80 per GRT. Sixteen refrigerated trawlers were permitted to fish inside the 12-mile zone, after payment of a similar fishing fee. The Japanese were allowed to operate 18 ice boats in coastal waters to supply the freezer plants and to train local fishermen. Moreover, the Japanese were required to help manage the on-shore freezing plants which purchased fish caught by the Japanese vessels.

April 1974: Details were lacking, but the fee for fishing in local waters was increased to $150 per GRT.

June 1975: Japan and Mauritania signed an agreement extending the 1974 fisheries agreement.

The 1974 Japanese fleet consisted of 23 trawlers, 100 to 293 GRT, which landed 12,062 t of fishery products at Nouadhibou. Cephalopods represented 95 percent of the Japanese catch (octopus - 81.5 percent, cuttlefish - 10.7 percent, and squid - 2.8 percent). Between January and August 1974, the Japanese operated only 18 to 19 trawlers, but increased their number from 21 to 23 vessels during the last 4 months of the year. The Japanese vessels unloaded an average of 14.6 t of fishery products at each port call and averaged monthly landings of 51.3 t per vessel. Most of this fish was frozen and delivered to SOFRIMA and MAFCO for processing.

D. Soviet Union

February 1973: The Soviet Minister of Fisheries, Alexander Ishkov, visited Mauritania to propose a cooperative development program for Mauritania's fishing industry. According to the

5-year agreement that was announced later, the Soviet Union was to supply the fish-processing plants at Nouadhibou with 30,000 t of fish annually. To supply this, the agreement allowed the Soviets to operate 35 small side trawlers (SRT-400 class, 230 to 270 GRT, 300 horsepower) off Mauritania. This plan was hampered by a lack of adequate refrigeration facilities in Nouadhibou. For example, only 15 of the 35 vessels authorized were fishing in October 1975. Their entire catch was delivered to IMAPEC.

The agreement also stipulated that the Soviet Union deliver two coastal patrol craft to Mauritania, construct a marine research center and aquarium, and train Mauritanian fishermen aboard Soviet vessels. The first of the patrol vessels, a MIRNYI-class whale catcher retired from the Soviet whaling fleet, was delivered in 1974. This vessel, not specifically equipped for patrol work, has not been greatly used by the Mauritanians. Delivery of the second vessel was delayed at the request of the Mauritanian Government. In addition to training Mauritanians in Soviet fishery schools, the Soviets also agreed to place 250 Mauritanian fishermen aboard their trawlers for practical training at sea.

In return for these services, the Mauritanian Government authorized the Soviets to operate 15 large factory stern trawlers[2/] in Mauritanian-claimed territorial waters 12 to 30 miles from the coast. The catch of these vessels would be sent back to the Soviet Union for processing and sale. The side trawlers SRT, operated by the Soviet Union in Mauritanian-claimed territorial waters, unload an average of 7.1 t of fresh or chilled fish during each visit to Nouadhibou, or 40.1 t per month[3/].

March and April 1975: Five Soviet experts from the All-Union Scientific Research Institute for Marine Fisheries and Oceanography (VNIRO) visited Nouadhibou. They prepared a feasibility study for the construction of the marine research center and selected its site 15 miles (28 km) south of the port; no further work on the project has been done. Once completed, the center will apparently be staffed with some Soviet personnel. A Soviet research vessel, Professor Vize, operated in Mauritanian-claimed territorial waters in late 1975 and early 1976. The results of this research cruise will be submitted to Mauritanian fishery officials. A joint Soviet-Mauritanian commission meets annually to discuss research projects and fishing operations for the following year.

March and April 1976: A Soviet delegation held discussions with Mauritanian officials in Nouakchott.

May 18, 1976: The Soviet Minister of Fisheries announced the establishment of a joint venture with Mauritania. The new company will be involved in fishing as well as in processing and marketing seafood products.

In 1974, the Soviet fleet landed 6,554 t of fishery products in Nouadhibou; most were processed at the IMAPEC complex; the rest went to SOFRIMA. Cephalopods accounted for 76.4 percent of this catch (octopus - 59.1 percent; cuttlefish - 7.1 percent; and squid - 10.2 percent).

E. Other

1. Algeria

May 15, 1974: The Government of Algeria and Mauritania established a joint fishing company, the Société Algero-Mauritanienne de Pêche (ALMAP). Each country owns 50 percent of the $8.4 million capital. Fishing began in July 1974 with four vessels (105 GRT each), but these vessels, crewed by Mauritanians, have been operating at only 20 to 30 percent of their capacity. During the conflict over the former Spanish Sahara, ALMAP discontinued all operations and the company's four vessels returned to Algeria.

2. Bulgaria

November 18, 1971: A fisheries agreement was announced, but no details were provided. The agreement reportedly gave Bulgarian fishing vessels permission to fish in Mauritanian waters in exchange for training local fishermen both in Bulgaria and aboard Bulgarian vessels fishing off Mauritania. The agreement became inoperative when the Bulgarian Government did not ratify it within the 2-month period specified by the Mauritanians.

June 19, 1974: Representatives of Bulgaria and Mauritania signed a Cooperation Agreement (which included fisheries) and a Consular Accord in Sofia. Both agreements were sent to their countries for ratification.

December 31, 1974: The Bulgarian-Mauritanian Cooperation Agreement was ratified by Mauritanian President Ould Daddah. The agreement covers cooperation in fisheries, agriculture, mining, commerce, and other areas. The Consular Accord with Bulgaria was also ratified.

2/ Soviet factory and freezer stern trawlers range in gross tonnage from 2,600 to about 3,300 GRT.

3/ The annual catch of an SRT would thus be about 500 t a year. This is far below the Soviet-reported annual average catch for this type of vessel. Pravda of January 28, 1963, reported that the average catch per SRT in 1962 was about 1,400 t. The highest recorded catch for this type of Soviet trawler was 3,200 t.

3. Egypt

December 27, 1973: General Imad Eddine Medkour, heading a delegation from Cairo's Ministry of Fisheries, arrived in Mauritania to "renew" the fisheries agreement between Egypt and Mauritania. This agreement reportedly permitted the 2,000-GRT trawlers Rass el Bar and Rass el Benas to fish in Mauritanian-claimed waters without payment of any fees and without landing a portion of their catch in Mauritanian ports as required of most foreign fishing vessels.

4. Ghana

April 25, 1974: Ghana and Mauritania signed an agreement that permitted 10 vessels, totaling 1,500 GRT, to fish in Mauritanian-claimed waters. In return, Ghana was obligated to furnish the catch of 20 fishing vessels. Ghana also agreed to offer two scholarships annually to Mauritanian students. Moreover, the agreement envisaged an exchange of fishery specialists.

January 27 to February 1, 1976: The Ghanaian Director of Fisheries visited Mauritania as head of a fisheries delegation. According to the Government-controlled daily, Chaab, the Mauritanian delegation explained the new fishing policy to the Ghanaians as well as "new conditions which must be fulfilled before an authorization is given to fish in Mauritanian waters". A fisheries agreement was concluded between the two countries, but it has not yet been approved by the Ghanaian Government.

5. Greece

July 28, 1966: Greek fishing vessels, but not factoryships, were allowed to fish in Mauritanian waters upon payment of $15 per GRT. The agreement stipulated that 25 percent of the catch had to be sold locally and the remainder either stored and/or processed in Mauritania. In addition, 25 percent of each vessel's crew had to be Mauritanians who would receive training in fishery operations.

June 20, 1969: The Greeks agreed to pay about $250,000 (or about $10,000 per vessel) for a fleet of 25 vessels with an average tonnage of 500 GRT. The Greeks were allowed to fish 3 to 30 miles off Mauritania. The 5-year agreement also stipulated that the Greek owners would employ three Mauritanian crewmen aboard each vessel, and that the Greek Government would grant an import license for 3,000 t of frozen Mauritanian-produced fish. Later (year unknown), another agreement was reached permitting five Greek vessels to fish for shrimp and finfish in Mauritanian-claimed waters.

1973: The Greeks and the Mauritanians held a mixed commission meeting on fisheries.

June 28, 1974: A new fishing agreement was signed with Greece. Many important articles of the agreement are not subject to renegotiation during the 5 years in which the agreement is valid. The agreed fee of $45 per GRT is, however, renegotiable. Greece agreed to build a $1.5 million tourist hotel in Nouadhibou in exchange for fishing rights. Greece also offered to train 15 Mauritanians annually in fisheries, tourism, and communications.

February 19, 1976: The fishing agreement signed in 1974 entered into force. Greece's failure to construct a tourist hotel by December 31, 1975, gave Mauritania the right to revise the agreement. Mauritanian officials have reportedly insisted upon an increase in the $45 per GRT fee agreed to in 1974.

Greek vessels have fished in Mauritanian waters since 1966 when the first fisheries agreement between the two countries was signed. At one point, 25 Greek vessels were fishing in local waters. In 1974, however, no Greek vessels were listed as having landed any fishery products at Nouadhibou. According to the Greek fishery journal, Alieia Fishing, members of the Union of Greek Distant Water Fishing Owners reported disappointing catches in 1974 and 1975, causing them to question the profitability of operations off Mauritania considering the cost of Mauritanian licenses. The Greek fishermen believe that the Arguian Bank is being overfished.

6. Iceland

Late 1975: Icelandic newspapers reported that five Icelandic vessels would begin fishing for mackerel and sardines off Mauritania. Icelandic fishermen have not fished there before. The catches will be transferred to the Norwegian factoryship, Norglobal.

7. Italy

June 3, 1966: The Italians agreed to pay $15 per GRT each year for 30 to 90 vessels, to fish in local waters. Additionally, the Italians agreed to employ three local fishermen on each vessel as trainee-crewmen. The 3-year agreement is no longer operational.

May 15, 1974: A private, joint venture agreement between the Formia Freezing Fish Company of Milan and Ahmed Ould Megaya resulted in the establishment of COMIP. There was no Government participation in this venture. According to Megaya, who became COMIP's president, five Italian freezer trawlers and five vessels, using ice to keep fish chilled, would operate from the port of Nouakchott. This fleet would be serviced by a refrigerated fish carrier.

8. Ivory Coast

Five 1,500-GRT vessels were given permission to fish in Mauritanian waters, but no information is available confirming Ivorian fishing operations.

9. Kuwait

1973: An agreement was signed with United Fisheries of Kuwait establishing a joint venture called Société Mauritano-Koweitienne d'Armement et de Pêche (SOMKAP). The venture operates the four converted shrimp trawlers of 160-GRT each that arrived in December 1974. Their catch totaled 148 t during operations in 1975.

10. Morocco

1974: Five 330-GRT vessels were permitted to fish in Mauritanian-claimed waters. The Moroccans were to train from two to five Mauritanian crewmen aboard these vessels.

1975: One Moroccan vessel reportedly fished off Mauritania in 1975; it was not required to land a portion of its catch locally.

April 14, 1976: The Governments of Morocco and Mauritania signed an economic cooperation agreement to develop the area formerly known as the Spanish Sahara. In Article III of the agreement, both countries agreed to develop the fisheries of the area and granted each other the most-favored-nation status in their respective territorial seas. It was further agreed that joint fishery firms would be established and a mixed commission created to study fishery development.

11. Netherlands

A Dutch fish meal factoryship, Interpêche, operates off Mauritania supplying fish for reduction into fish meal. The vessel, reported to be 20,000 to 30,000 GRT, does not call at Nouadhibou; needed supplies are delivered to the factoryship either by its catcher boats or by cargo vessels. In 1974, Interpêche delivered 10,374 t of fish to Nouadhibou for local fish meal plants.

12. Nigeria

October 20, 1975: The Nigerians were permitted to fish in Mauritanian-claimed waters upon payment of an $180 per GRT fee. Nigeria sought permission because it recently established a deep-sea fishing company owned in partnership with the Aker's financial group of Norway.

13. Norway

Two Norwegian companies, ASTRA and NORGLOBAL, operate off Mauritania with factory ships of the same name. Astra operates two high-seas seiners, while Norglobal fishes with 15 vessels. Both companies land a portion of their catch at Nouadhibou for reduction to fish meal; in 1974, such landings totaled 10,998 t. The contract with ASTRA provides for the establishment of a quality control laboratory. These companies have stopped delivering fish to Nouadhibou because of the decline in world fish meal prices in 1975, but may still be fishing in the general area around the Canary Islands. They will presumably operate in Mauritanian waters when world fish meal prices reach at least $300 per ton.

14. Panama

April 3, 1967: The Government of Mauritania signed an agreement with the Panamanian fisheries firm Pesquerías de Panama. The agreement provided for a royalty payment to Mauritania of about $10.80 per ton for all fish caught by the Panamanian fleet of 35 vessels (each averaging 300 GRT). This fee was later increased to about $25.20 per ton. The projected annual catch was 16,000 t. The agreement has since been terminated. There had been some discussion of allowing Panamanian vessels to return in the near future, but no decision has yet been made.

15. People's Republic of China.

December 1974: The People's Republic of China has extended US$55 million in credits to Mauritania to build a deepwater port at Nouakchott. The construction on the new port had not begun as of early 1976.

16. Poland

November 8, 1965 to January 15, 1966: Scientists from the Polish Sea Fisheries Institute surveyed the fishing grounds off Cape Timiris, Mauritania. Poland was the only East European nation fishing off Mauritania from 1965 to 1970.

1971: The Mauritanian Coast Guard seized a Polish vessel (no name given) fishing without authorization in Mauritanian waters. A US$120,000 fine was levied which the Poles reluctantly paid.

September 17, 1975: Polish Deputy Minister of Trade and Maritime Economy, Romuald Pietraszek, signed a cooperative fisheries agreement with the Government of Muaritania. No details were released.

March 16, 1976: A Polish delegation met with the Mauritanian Fisheries Director.

17. Portugal

April 1975: A six-man fisheries team, headed by Ruis Cabeçadas from the Office of the Secretariat of State for Fisheries, visited Mauritania, but no agreement was reached. The negotiations reportedly dealt with the renewal of a 1974 agreement signed between Mauritania and a Portuguese company. Mauritania announced its desire to change this agreement to the

government-to-government level.

March 12, 1976: A bilateral fisheries agreement between Portugal and Mauritania was signed. Mauritania reportedly insisted on more stringent conditions for allowing continued Portuguese fishing in its waters. Portugal must pay a fee of $158 per GRT; train two to three Mauritanian crewmen on each vessel; land the entire catch in Mauritanian ports; and deliver part of this catch to Mauritanian processing plants. To avoid more stringent terms, Portugal promised to grant assistance in fishermen training and scientific fishery research. In addition, Portugal agreed to soon create a mixed fisheries company that would become the basis for further bilateral cooperation.

18. Romania

October 19, 1973: A fishery agreement "in principle" was announced.

June 25, 1974: The Romanians agreed to establish a joint fishery venture in exchange for the right to fish in Mauritanian-claimed waters. No additional details were provided, but nine pelagic stern trawlers reportedly will be deployed.

1975: Two Romanian vessels were reported fishing in Mauritanian waters.

Early 1976: No Romanian vessels fished off Mauritania.

19. Senegal

1974: Senegalese artisanal fishermen are permitted to fish in Mauritanian-claimed waters.

Appendix A.--Mauritania fishery landings at the port of Nouadhibou by foreign and national fleets, 1974

Country	Product Form							Total
	Fresh	Frozen	Canned	Salted-dried	Lobster	Roe	Fish Meal	
	Metric tons							
France	-	2	-	17	15	-	-	34
Japan	-	11,739	-	233	-	-	90	12,062
Kuwait	-	148	-	-	-	-	-	148
Mauritania								
Imraguens	-	-	-	1,336	-	6	-	1,342
Pirogue	1,034	1,637	2	411	-	-	465	3,549
Netherlands	-	-	-	-	-	-	10,374	10,374
Norway								
Astra	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,508	8,508
Norglobal	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,490	2,490
Spain								
Canary	1	1,521	360	3,297	-	-	9,425	14,604
Sahara	-	137	48	181	-	-	7,404	7,770
Tuna imports	-	-	1,931	-	-	-	-	1,931
Trawler fleet	-	415		8	-	-	234	657
USSR	-	5,514	522	124	-	-	394	6,554
Total	1,035	21,113	2,863	5,607	15	6	39,384	70,023

Source: Laboratoire des Pêches. Direction des Pêches. Ministère du Developpement Industriel. Bulletin du Laboratoire des Pêches de Nouadhibou, No. 3, December, 1974, p. 166.

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